

NATURAL HISTORY MISCELLANEA

Published by

The Chicago Academy of Sciences

Lincoln Park-2001 N. Clark St., Chicago 14, Illinois, U.S.A.

No. 167

February 13, 1959

Name Changes and Nomenclatural Stability

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In a recent paper the current and universally used name *Vampyrops* Peters, 1865, has been replaced by the name *Platyrrhinus* Saussure, 1860, on the grounds that this latter name has temporal priority. Again, our attention is focused on the paradoxical situation in which rules formulated to bring about universality and stability are invoked to remove a name that is universally used and understood by all.

The facts, however, do not support the validity of this recent change. The evidence is as follows: In 1798, Clairville gave the generic name *Platyrrhinus* to a number of species of anthribid beetles. This generic name, probably formed from the Greek words *platyrris* (flat) and *inus* (nose), was emended by subsequent authors, and *Platyrrhinus* and *Platyrrhinidae* became well established names in the Coleoptera. So, while it is true that *Platyrrhinus* Saussure, 1860, antedates *Vampyrops* Peters, 1865, it is of no consequence, for it is equally true that Saussure's name itself is antedated by the emended name *Platyrrhinus* Fabricius, 1801, a beetle. The pertinent synonymy for the beetle and bat in question is as follows:

- Beetle. 1798. *Platyrrhinus* Clairville, *Entomologie Helvetique* . . . , 1:112.
- Beetle. 1801. *Platyrrhinus* Fabricius, *Systema Eleutheratorum* ... , 2:408.
- Bat. 1860. *Platyrrhinus* Saussure, *Rev. et Mag. Zool.*, ser. 2, 12: 429.
- Bat. 1865. *Vampyrops* Peters, *Monatsber. k. preuss. Akad. Wissensch.*, Berlin, 1865: 356.
- Bat. 1958. *Platyrrhinus*, Hershkovitz, *Fieldiana: Zool.*, 36: 613.

Under the rules, *Platyrrhinus* Fabricius, 1801, is an invalid emendation of the original spelling. It has status in nomenclature as a separate name with its own date and author, and as such it is a homonym of any other name of the same spelling. Thus, *Platyrrhinus* Saussure, 1860, is

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a junior homonym. *Vampyrops* is the valid name for the bats that for the past 93 years have been known by that name.

Of more concern to us than the validity of the name *Platyrrhinus* is that interpretation of the Rules of Nomenclature which compels authors to attempt to change a name that has been in current use for 93 years, or that interpretation that justifies the replacement of the universally used names *Citellus* and *Odocoileus*. In our opinion these are the results of the most unimaginative interpretation that can be given a code of rules formulated to bring about stability. We thus oppose these changes and the philosophy that prompts them. We oppose them not because of any sentimental attachment to current names, but because such changes are needless, because these changes undermine the best interests of taxonomy, and because they indicate that these authors in attempting to follow the letter of the law have missed completely what is more important the spirit of that law.

What ingenuity we possess we should devote not to unearth long buried and forgotten names but to work for the preservation of stability when we find it. There is no question in the minds of the majority of zoologists that such names as *Citellus* and *Odocoileus* should not be changed. If *Citellus* dates from Oken whose works are not binomial, why can we not cite this name from the next author who used it ? If the original description of *Dama* refers to an *Odocoileus*, why can we not cite the name *Dama* from the first author who used it for the European species ? This is a matter of which authority should be cited for the names in question, not which names should be used. Wherein lies the service to stability and universality in removing names which are familiar not only to mammalian taxonomists but to an uncountable number of biologists?

It is not true that, if a name is found which antedates the current one, the older name *must* of necessity be re-established. Under the Rules, an older name has no sacred right to replace a newer one *if such a change threatens stability*. Likewise, once a name has achieved universal use it is within the provisions and intent of the Rules that such a name should continue to enjoy universal use.

In support of the ideas presented in this paper we cite the pertinent sections from the revised English text of the *Règles* (*Bull. Zool. Nomenclature*, volume **14**, 1957) as approved at the International Zoological Congress in London in July, 1958. We are extremely grate-

ful to Dr. John O. Corliss, the University of Illinois representative to the London congress, for his notes on the changes made at that meeting. The paragraphs that follow include insertions suggested and passed in discussion by the London Colloquium on Zoological Nomenclature. Although the wording may not be identical with the final official draft of the entire Code now being prepared, the meanings expressed in the following statements will be maintained.

PREAMBLE.

The object of the *Code of Zoological Nomenclature* is to establish the basis for a stable and universal set of names for taxonomic groups of animals under which the name for each unit is unique and distinctive. All its provisions are subservient to this end.

The Rules do not trespass upon the freedom of taxonomic thought.

When the stability of nomenclature is threatened by the application of the Rules to an individual case, the Plenary Powers of the International Commission afford relief.

ARTICLE 5. CONTINUITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF USAGE.

Section 2. Suspension of the Rules.—The Commission, acting for the Congresses, shall have Plenary Powers to suspend any Rule or Rules, or to reverse any previous decision the application of which to a particular case would in its opinion disturb stability or universality or cause confusion. For the purpose of preventing such disturbance and of promoting a stable and universally accepted nomenclature they may, under these Plenary Powers, annul any name, type-designation or other published nomenclatural act, and validate or establish replacements.

Section 4. Overlooked names.—Whenever the Commission is notified of the existence of a long-overlooked name the adoption of which would threaten stability it shall publish a notice in the *Bulletin* proposing to nullify it. If it receives no objection within two years nullification shall become effective and the name be entered on the appropriate *Index*.

If an objection is received within two years, the Commission, acting in the interests of continuity and universality and if necessary under its Plenary Powers, shall decide the issue.

"Recommendation" 5. Notification.—Any taxonomist who rediscovers a long-overlooked name should at once notify the Commission.

ARTICLE 8. THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIORITY: THE VALIDITY OF NAMES.

Section 1. The valid name.—Except where otherwise stated in this *Code*, *e*, the only valid name of a taxon shall be the oldest available name applied to it, or, in the case of a genus or species, to any of its subgenera or subspecies, respectively, that:

- (1) Is not a junior homonym of another name,
- (2) is not, in the view of its user, a junior subjective synonym of a name that is not itself a junior homonym,
- (3) has not been suppressed by the Commission, and

(4) is not voided under a provision of any Article of this Code: but if the Commission has taken specific action to validate a given name in a particular sense, or failing that, if such a name is validated by any provision of Article 5, then that name shall be the valid name of the taxon in question regardless of all other considerations.

ARTICLE 29. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL
NOMENCLATURE: ORGANIC RULES.

Section 7. (c) Retention of well-known names. It shall be the duty of the Commission to take action under its Plenary Powers to preserve continuity and universality of usage when informed that the application of a well-known and commonly used name is threatened.

(e) Long forgotten names.—It shall be the duty of the Commission, under its Plenary Powers, to annul long-overlooked names.

(m) Emendations.—It shall be the duty of the Commission, acting if necessary under its Plenary Powers, to decide whether a currently used but invalid emendation shall be adopted in the interests of uniformity, if a challenge has been lodged against doing so.

It seems important to realize that the rule of priority is not the *only* guiding principle in the Code. For a sane approach to nomenclatural changes authors *must* consider the article dealing with "Continuity and Universality of Usage" of equal importance with that dealing with the "Principle of Priority." The deciding factor as to which one of these two fundamental principles decides an issue rests on which one *best serves the interests of stability and universality*. Just as justice cannot be achieved by the strict application of any one law, so stability cannot result from the adherence to any one principle. In the final analysis, if nomenclature is to succeed in its service to biologists it will always require a generous measure of good judgment and common sense.

In conclusion, since one cannot expect the viewpoint of some to change, needless name changing will continue. Biologists however, can help greatly toward nomenclatural stability by taking greater interest in matters of name changes, by requiring unquestionable proof and clear evidence of desirability of any change before it is followed, and finally by assuring proper representation of their ideas in nomenclatural committees and international congresses.